

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1 - 21 (Canceled).

22. (Currently Amended) A computer-based corporate rating system, wherein a communication terminal of a corporate rating business entity engaging in a business of performing corporate ratings having said communication terminal, a communication terminal of one or a plurality of target enterprises each having said communication terminal and each having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity and desiring a corporate rating of itself, a communication terminal of an accounting firm having said communication terminal and having a prescribed contractual relationship with an application service provider (ASP) and each one of said plurality of target enterprises, an ASP server of said ASP having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity, said each one of said target enterprises, and said accounting firm, are mutually electrically connected via an appropriate communication circuit,

wherein said ASP comprises storage means for storing business information indicating general business activities of each one of said target enterprises, including at least financial, accounting, and tax information for each one of said target enterprises, separately, into one of a plurality of specific areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and respectively allocated to each one of said target enterprises,

and further wherein said system comprises functions, each being performed by a respective computer that executes computer-readable program code stored on computer-readable medium, of:

periodically transmitting, by said terminal of each of said target enterprises to said ASP via said communication circuit, said business information for said respective target enterprise, in response to a specific operation signal issued from said respective target enterprise, so that said business information provided to said ASP is current business information;

determining, by said ASP server in response to said transmission of said business information, whether or not said target enterprise which sent said business information to said ASP has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific

contract with said ASP, allowing said target enterprise to store said business information of said target enterprise in one of the specific areas of said storage means of said ASP, which is allocated for said target enterprise;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said target enterprise to said ASP to review or download said business information stored in said specific area allocated for said target enterprise in said storage means provided in said ASP, whether or not said target enterprise which sent said access request signal to said ASP has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP, allowing said target enterprise to access said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said target enterprise so that said target enterprise can perform an operation for viewing or downloading, from said ASP via said communication terminal of said target enterprise, said business information of said target enterprise;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to access the business information of a specific target enterprise stored in one of said specific areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and allocated to said specific target enterprise, whether or not said accounting firm which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, allowing said accounting firm to access **[[to]]** said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said accounting firm can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said storage means of said ASP, via said communication terminal of said accounting firm, said business information with regard to said target enterprise and thereby said accounting firm can evaluate closing account details of said specific target enterprise and issue an electronic signature certifying the accuracy and appropriateness of said closing account details of said specific target enterprise;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to store a electronic signature that certifies said closing account details of said target enterprise in said storage means of said ASP, whether or not said accounting firm which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the

specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, allowing said accounting firm to access said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said electronic signature that certifies said closing account details of said specific target enterprise formed by said accounting firm is stored therein;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal from said corporate rating business entity to said ASP to access said business information of said specific target enterprise stored in said storage means of said ASP when said corporate rating business entity has been requested from a target enterprise which desires to obtain a corporate rating thereof, whether or not said corporate rating business entity which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said corporate rating business entity has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, allowing said corporate rating business entity to access [[to]] said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise, so that said corporate rating business entity can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said ASP, via said communication terminal of said corporate rating business entity, said business information with regard to said specific target enterprise, and thereby said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise is completed using a corporate rating software in said corporate rating business entity; and

allowing, by said terminal of said corporate rating business entity, said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise formed by corporate rating business entity to be disclosed to said target enterprise that output the access request signal via said communication circuit.

23. (Previously Presented) A corporate rating system according to claim 22, wherein said corporate rating business entity refers said electronic signature certified closing account issued for the target enterprise and stored in said storage means of said ASP in said allowing function, and wherein said business information provided to said ASP by said target enterprise includes non-publically-available information of said target enterprise.

24. (Previously Presented) A corporate rating system according to claim 22, wherein said communication circuit is an Internet.

25. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented corporate rating method, wherein a communication terminal of a corporate rating business entity engaging in a business of performing corporate ratings having said communication terminal, a communication terminal of one or a plurality of target enterprises each having said communication terminal and each having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity and desiring a corporate rating of itself, a communication terminal of an accounting firm having said communication terminal and having a prescribed contractual relationship with said application service provider (ASP) and each one of said plurality of target enterprises, an ASP server of said ASP having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity, each one of said target enterprises, and said accounting firm, are mutually electrically connected via an appropriate communication circuit,

wherein said ASP comprises storage means for storing business information indicating general business activities of each one of said target enterprises, including at least financial, accounting, and tax information for each one of said target enterprises, into one of a plurality of specific areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and respectively allocated to each one of said target enterprises,

and further wherein the method comprising the steps of:

periodically transmitting, by said terminal of each of said target enterprises to said ASP via said communication circuit, said business information for said respective target enterprise, in response to a specific operation signal issued from said respective target enterprise, so that said business information stored provided to said ASP is current business information;

determining, by said ASP server in response to said transmission of said business information, whether or not said target enterprise which sent said business information to said ASP has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP, allowing said target enterprise to store said business information of said target enterprise in one of the specific areas of said storage means of said ASP which is allocated for said target enterprise;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said target enterprise to said ASP to review or download said business information stored in said specific area allocated for said target enterprise in said storage means provided in said ASP, whether or not said target enterprise which sent said access request signal to said ASP

has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP, allowing said target enterprise to access **[[to]]** said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said target enterprise so that said target enterprise can perform an operation for viewing or downloading, from said ASP via said communication terminal of said target enterprise, said business information of said target enterprise;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to access the business information of a specific target enterprise stored in one of said specific areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and allocated to said specific target enterprise, whether or not said accounting firm which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, allowing said accounting firm to access **[[to]]** said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said accounting firm can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said storage means of said ASP, via said communication terminal of said accounting firm, said business information with regard to said target enterprise and thereby said accounting firm can evaluate closing account details of said specific target enterprise and issue an electronic signature certifying the accuracy and appropriateness of said closing account details of said specific target enterprise;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to store a electronic signature that certifies said closing account details of said target enterprise in said storage means of said ASP, whether or not said accounting firm which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise allowing said accounting firm to access said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said electronic signature that certifies said closing account details of said specific target enterprise formed by said accounting firm is stored therein;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal from said corporate rating business entity to said ASP to access said business information of said

specific target enterprise stored in said storage means of said ASP when said corporate rating business entity has been requested from a target enterprise which desires to obtain a corporate rating thereof, whether or not said corporate rating business entity which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said corporate rating business entity has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, allowing said corporate rating business entity to access [[to]] said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise, so that said corporate rating business entity can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said ASP, via said communication terminal of said corporate rating business entity, said business information with regard to said specific target enterprise, and thereby said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise is completed using a corporate rating software in said corporate rating business entity; and

allowing, by said terminal of said corporate rating business entity, said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise formed by corporate rating business entity to be disclosed to said target enterprise that output the access request signal via said communication circuit.

26. (Previously Presented) A corporate rating method according to claim 25, wherein said corporate rating business entity refers said electronic signature certified closing account issued for the target enterprise and stored in said storage means of said ASP, in said fifth determining step, and wherein said business information provided to said ASP by said target enterprise includes non-publically-available information of said target enterprise.

27. (Previously Presented) A corporate rating method according to claim 25, wherein said communication circuit is an Internet.

28. (Currently Amended) A computer-based corporate rating system, wherein a communication terminal of a corporate rating business entity engaging in a business of performing corporate ratings having said communication terminal, a communication terminal of one or a plurality of target enterprises each having said communication terminal and each having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity and desiring a corporate rating of itself, a communication terminal of an accounting firm having said communication terminal and having a prescribed contractual relationship with an

application service provider (ASP) and each one of said plurality of target enterprises, an ASP server of said ASP having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity, said each one of said target enterprises, and said accounting firm, are mutually electrically connected via an appropriate communication circuit,

wherein said ASP comprises a storage unit configured to store business information indicating general business activities of each one of said target enterprises, including at least financial, accounting, and tax information for each one of said target enterprises, separately, into one of a plurality of specific areas of said storage unit provided in said ASP and respectively allocated to each one of said target enterprises,

and further wherein said system comprises functions, each being performed by a respective computer that executes computer-readable program code stored on computer-readable medium, of:

periodically transmitting, by said terminal of each of said target enterprises to said ASP via said communication circuit, said business information for said respective target enterprise, in response to a specific operation signal issued from said respective target enterprise, so that said business information stored provided to said ASP is current business information;

determining, by said ASP server in response to said transmission of said business information, whether or not said target enterprise which sent said business information to said ASP has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP, allowing said target enterprise to store said business information of said target enterprise in one of the specific areas of said storage means of said ASP which is allocated for said target enterprise;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said target enterprise to said ASP to review or download said business information stored in said specific area allocated for said target enterprise in said storage means provided in said ASP, whether or not said target enterprise which sent said access request signal to said ASP has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP, allowing said target enterprise to access said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said target enterprise so that said target enterprise can perform an operation for viewing or downloading, from said ASP via said communication terminal of said target enterprise, said business information of said target enterprise;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to access the business information of a specific target enterprise stored in one of said specific areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and allocated to said specific target enterprise, whether or not said accounting firm which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, allowing said accounting firm to access **[[to]]** said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said accounting firm can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said storage means of said ASP, via said communication terminal of said accounting firm, said business information with regard to said target enterprise and thereby said accounting firm can evaluate closing account details of said specific target enterprise and issue an electronic signature certifying the accuracy and appropriateness of said closing account details of said specific target enterprise;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to store a electronic signature that certifies said closing account details of said target enterprise in said storage means of said ASP, whether or not said accounting firm which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise allowing said accounting firm to access said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said electronic signature that certifies said closing account details of said specific target enterprise formed by said accounting firm is stored therein;

determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal from said corporate rating business entity to said ASP to access **[[to]]** said business information of said specific target enterprise stored in said storage means of said ASP when said corporate rating business entity has been requested from a target enterprise which desires to obtain a corporate rating thereof, whether or not said corporate rating business entity which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said corporate rating business entity has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise allowing said corporate rating business



entity to access [[to]] said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise, so that said corporate rating business entity can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said ASP, via said communication terminal of said corporate rating business entity, said business information with regard to said specific target enterprise, and thereby said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise is completed using a corporate rating software in said corporate rating business entity; and

allowing, by said terminal of said corporate rating business entity, said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise formed by corporate rating business entity to be disclosed to said target enterprise that output the access request signal via said communication circuit.

29. (Previously Presented) A corporate rating system according to claim 28, wherein said corporate rating business entity refers said electronic signature certified closing account issued for the target enterprise and stored in said storage unit of said ASP in said allowing function, and wherein said business information provided to said ASP by said target enterprise includes non-publically-available information of said target enterprise.

30. (Previously Presented) A corporate rating system according to claim 28, wherein said communication circuit is an Internet.